

Administration Tightening System Of Keeping National Secrets Secret

By RICHARD BURT
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WASHINGTON, Sept. 6 — The Carter Administration is instituting a new security designation, higher than "top secret," in an effort to stop the disclosure of national secrets, Government aides said today.

The officials said that under a wholesale revision of the Administration's classification system initiated by President Carter early this year, the new designation, known as "Royal," would be applied to information stemming from the most sensitive intelligence sources and methods, restricting distribution of that information to a small number of senior officials and members of Congress.

The step could represent a significant departure in the Government's handling of intelligence information, particularly with regard to its sharing of that data with Congress. It is also said to reflect growing official concern over foreign espionage and disclosures to the press.

An 'Outrageous Fabrication'

While confirming the existence of a new security system, a White House spokesman characterized as an "outrageous fabrication" published suggestions that it had been designed to protect information that could politically embarrass the White House.

Intelligence officials said that the new classification was to go into effect soon and that no intelligence information had yet been designated "Royal."

One intelligence aide said the new system was the product "of a couple of years of thought about how to handle the growing number of security breaches of sensitive information," including a case in 1978 when an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency gave Soviet agents details of an American surveillance satellite. The employee, Peter Kampiles, was caught and later found guilty of passing secrets to Moscow.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Mr. Carter's national security adviser, are said to have initiated the new security system. Aides said that both officials believed that the Government was becoming so overwhelmed with intelligence information that intelligence aides could not distinguish between normal and really sensitive information.

As a result, some vital data, such as that concerning the country's capabilities for monitoring Soviet missile tests, were routinely circulated to large numbers of people, which is said to have fostered espionage and press disclosures. Officials said that under the new system, the most sensitive data would be held more closely. "For example, if we had a spy in the Soviet Politburo, all of his reports would be classified 'Royal,'" an intelligence aide said.

Officials said that at the suggestion of Mr. Turner and Mr. Brzezinski, President Carter asked the intelligence community last January to produce a new system for designating and handling intelligence.

The Government already classifies some information above "top secret." Because of the complexity of the current system and its secrecy, it is difficult to know exactly how many people now have access to the most sensitive information.

But the new system would replace current designations and limit the most sensitive data, an intelligence aide said, to a narrow circle of officials and members of Congress. Less sensitive intelligence information would be more widely circulated within the Government and on Capitol Hill.

According to officials, only about two dozen senior aides in the Executive Branch and fewer than 10 members of Congress would be privy to information designated "Royal." Congressional aides said the recipients would include the majority and minority leaders of the House and the Senate and the ranking Republican and Democrat on the two congressional intelligence committees.

Noting that under the new system Republican leaders would have access to "Royal" intelligence, a White House aide said "this should prove that it is not political."

Some Republican congressional aides expressed deep suspicion that the new designation could be used for political purposes, and an article published today in The Daily Oklahoman in Oklahoma City, Okla., implied that the revisions were politically motivated. The newsa-

per also reported that the "Royal" designation had been applied to at least one cable in which Libyan officials described Billy Carter, the President's brother, as an "agent of influence."

The White House spokesman said that the White House had not seen all of the intelligence data pertaining to the Billy Carter case, but that none of the documents seen by the President or his aides has been designated "Royal." In fact, commenting on the "Royal" designation, the spokesman said that "the system of which that designation is to be part has not yet been implemented."

Concern in Congress

The question of how widely sensitive information should be circulated in Washington has long been at issue. In recent years, the Administration, under congressional pressure, has agreed to give Congress wide access to intelligence information.

Some members of Congress, informed of the new "Royal" designation, expressed concern that the Administration's new system would restrict the flow of information to Capitol Hill.

"Nothing I have seen suggests that it will be used for political purposes," Senator John Glenn, Democrat of Ohio, said in a telephone interview. "But I am concerned about our ability to get access to information we need."

Representative Les Aspin, Democrat of Wisconsin, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, expressed concern that the new designation could be used "to prevent Congress from asking questions about intelligence collection activities." He noted that the intelligence committees, under law, had to be informed about covert operations, but that the Administration could withhold information on Central Intelligence Agency activities to collect information.

At the White House, a spokesman expressed annoyance over the disclosure of the new designation, saying that it represented the "systematic pumping out of distorted information that is depicted as relying on intelligence."